

Reviews

Cuénot, Joël. 1993. *L'île de Pâques et la Plume du Dieu-Oiseau*. Editions Joël Cuénot, Meudon (France).

Review by Paul G. Bahn, Ph.D.

There have been a number of photo-books devoted to Easter Island over the past few decades, mostly in monochrome and often with an awkward shape and size for shelving. This newcomer is certainly a strange shape and size, but it is in full color and is a truly outstanding album. Part of a series called "Les Sentiers Imaginaires" (Imaginary Paths) produced by this author-publisher, it follows volumes on Iceland, Rhodes, Tunisia, Santorini, Egypt, etc.

Cuénot takes his own photographs, and many of them are quite outstanding; several are simply breathtaking. Objects, people and food resources are projected onto goose feathers; it sounds like an odd idea, but it is an effective device, often very beautiful and strangely haunting, as if ghosts of the past were being conjured up. Other photos of objects are more straightforward; those of wooden statuary, of *mataa*, and of the Echanrée tablet are particularly fine.

Cuénot's friend André Le Bescante designed and built a kite so that a radio-controlled camera could take aerial shots from a height of 20 meters. They intended to take a vast series of aerial pictures, but the island's notorious meteorological conditions hampered the work, and consequently only one such photograph—a wonderful picture of Ahu Vaihu with its fallen moai—appears in the book. There are some dramatically lit night-time photos of statues on the slopes of Rano Raraku, and of Ahu Nau Nau with eyes in place, and others of beautifully illuminated cave interiors.

I have only minor criticisms of Cuénot's accompanying text and captions. Firstly his (otherwise excellent) map of the island features Ahu Rikiriki, albeit as having disappeared (see Emily Mulloy in *Rapa Nui Notes* 4(2) 1987); he attributes the discovery of the island's palm tree to John Dransfield; he helps to perpetuate the long/short ears myth and the emphasis on cannibalism; and he still refers to the Orongo statue Hoa Hakananai'a as "The Wave Breaker", unaware that Steven Fischer has established that the name means "The Stolen Friend" (*RNJ* 5(4), 1991). Feeling incapable of assessing Heyerdahl's much publicized claims himself (although he wisely used Métraux as his principle source of information), Cuénot invited Catherine and Michel Orliac to perform this task in the book's final ten pages. They examine each of Heyerdahl's main arguments for links with South America, and reach the conclusion that the claims do not hold water and that the island's archaeology and culture are overwhelmingly Polynesian in origin and development.

Publications

• Allen, Tricia. 1993. Trashing Soundstage Earth: Kevin Costner's Easter Island Invasion. *Honolulu Weekly*, Vol. 3(47):6 ff. December.

• *Asian Perspectives*, Vol.32(1) 1993. The Journal of Archaeology for Asia and the Pacific. University of Hawai'i Press.

• Christensen, S. Stöcker and G. Schlätzer. 1993. "Comments on the conservation of *Sophora toromiro* Skottsh., from Easter Island." *Botanic Gardens Conservation News* 2(2):22-25. The authors claim that the Easter Island plant was not a separate or well-defined species—just a race of polymorphic species that exists elsewhere, and thus there "...may well be better candidates deserving of our conservation efforts." Because of this article, B.Alden has had all support cut off for his work on *toromiro* conservation and reintroduction.

• *Les Mystères Résolus de l'île de Pâques*. 1993. Cercle d'Etudes sur l'île de Pâques et la Polynésie. ISBN 2-9508078-0-1. Editions Step, BP 132, 91004 Evry Cedex, France. Price 150 Francs. Paperback, 503 pages; photographs, drawings and maps plus 24 color plates. This book contains papers by 25 authors, in French. We hope to have an in-depth review in our next issue.

• Culotta, Elizabeth. 1993. Deep-Sea Searchers [Plate Tectonics]. *Science World*, Vol.50(3):8-11.

• Dénes, Balázs. 1993. *A Húsvét-sziget fogságában*. A Szerző Kiadása Erd, Budapest. 148 pages plus glossary and bibliography. Paperback. 16 pages halftones, 4 pages color photos. Maps and drawings.

• Domenici, Davide e Viviano. 1993. Ascoltiamo i giganti custode del tempo. *Airone. Vivere la natura conoscere il mondo*. Nro. 150 (October: 58-77).

• Gaede, Peter-Matthias. 1993. Ein Paradies für Hollywood. *Geo*, Nr.6:12-36.

• *Généalogies Commentées des Aarii des îles de la Société*. 1991. Société des Etudes Océaniques, B.P.110, Papeete, Tahiti. 115 pages plus index; 14 halftones, paperback. In French.

• Huppertz, Dr. J. 1992. *Ancestor Worship on Easter Island*. Translated by Susan Johnson. München, Germany. ISBN 3-924109-16-8. [J. Huppertz, Ilmenaustrae 9, St. Augustin 2; 53757 Germany]. Eight